

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & FISHERIES
POST OFFICE BOX 98000
BATON ROUGE, LA 70898-9000

Waterfowl Population Estimates
in Louisiana's Coastal Zone Below
U.S. Highway 90 and on Catahoula Lake.

Date: Coastal Zone January 6-8, 2003
Catahoula Lake, January 3, 2003

Reported By: M. Perot, S. Durham,
J. Hanks, R. Myers

January 9, 2003

Pilot: P. Accardo, G. Rackal

Estimates made from Aircraft (*) Estimate less than 1,000

SPECIES	SOUTHWEST	SOUTHEAST	CATAHOULA LAKE	TOTALS
MALLARD	203,000	27,000	u	230,000
MOTTLED	24,000	28,000	0	52,000
GADWALL	535,000	582,000	1,000	1,118,000
WIGEON	32,000	14,000	u	46,000
GW TEAL	355,000	228,000	0	583,000
BW TEAL	64,000	23,000	0	87,000
SHOVELER	86,000	6,000	0	92,000
PINTAIL	51,000	24,000	u	75,000
TOTAL DABBLERS	1,350,000	932,000	1,000	2,283,000
SCAUP	15,000	100,000	u	115,000
RINGNECKED	124,000	55,000	13,000	192,000
CANVASBACK	0	93,000	35,000	128,000
TOTAL DIVERS	139,000	248,000	48,000	435,000
TOTAL DUCKS	1,489,000	1,180,000	49,000	2,718,000
COOTS	57,000	53,000	1,000	111,000

COMMENTS:

The estimate of 2.7 million ducks recorded this survey is 700,000 greater than last month's survey, 1.3 million less than the previous 5-year average, and 500,000 less than the average since 1979. It also is 600,000 less than last January's survey and more similar to what would be expected on average in November. The mallard estimate (203,000) is far below the previous 5-year average (620,000).

Waterfowl habitat is plentiful across the state with good conditions in the agricultural regions of southwest, central and northeast Louisiana. Rainfall has continued to be abundant and averaged 1.5 to 2 inches across the state during the Dec. 30 to 31

frontal passage, and waterfowl continue to be widely dispersed across the state, with refuge areas holding large numbers of birds, especially in central and north Louisiana. A notable absence of ducks was observed at the Atchafalaya delta probably due to the loss of food resources from this year's weather events on the coast.

The Catahoula Lake water level was 37.6 at the time of this report, 8 feet above the managed goal, and limiting use to primarily divers. The estimate for Catahoula Lake is below the 5-year (146,000) and long term averages. An additional 308,000 ducks and 253,000 geese were estimated in central and northwest Louisiana, higher than last year's estimates (142,000 and 147,000 respectively). The duck season ends in the East Zone on Jan. 26 and in the West Zone on Jan. 19.

SUMMARY OF 2002 /2003 WATERFOWL POPULATION ESTIMATES

SPECIES	11/02	12/02	1/03
MALLARD	61,000	243,000	230,000
MOTTLED	58,000	56,000	52,000
GADWALL	992,000	762,000	1,118,000
WIGEON	319,000	32,000	46,000
GW TEAL	246,000	222,000	583,000
BW TEAL	89,000	83,000	87,000
SHOVELER	9,000	77,000	92,000
PINTAIL	262,000	73,000	75,000
TOTAL DABBLERS	2,036,000	1,548,000	2,283,000
SCAUP	367,000	111,000	115,000
RINGNECKED	283,000	278,000	192,000
CANVASBACK	2,000	81,000	128,000
TOTAL DIVERS	652,000	470,000	435,000
TOTAL DUCKS	2,688,000	2,018,000	2,718,000
COOTS	81,000	223,000	111,000